
5. Given his upbringing and his father's passion for "hard" science, Nell's focus on humanity instead of zoology must hold great appeal for Bankson. What else draws him to Nell, leaving him with "Fierce desires, a great tide of feeling of which I could make little sense, an ache that seems to have no name but want. I want" (p. 86). What exactly does Bankson want?

6. Discuss the ways in which Bankson's attitude toward his work changes as he gets to know Nell and her research methods. Consider his acknowledgement of the limitations of an anthropologist's work and discuss how far it is possible to ever get to know another's culture. Take into account Bankson's interest in the objectivity of the observer.

7. Take your discussion of the previous question a step further by considering whether it is ever possible to truly know another person. Apply your observations to Bankson's views of Nell and Fen.

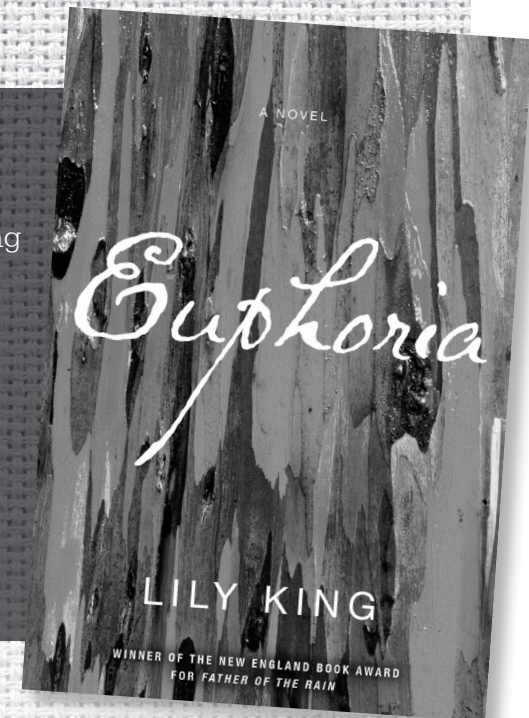
8. The theme of possession, of ownership, runs throughout the novel, twisting like the river Sepik itself through the relationships and conversations of the protagonists. Talk about Nell's search for "a group of people who give each other the room to be in whatever way they need to be" (p. 88). Has she found this kind of freedom in any of the tribes she has studied? In any of her relationships? Talk specifically about Fen and Bankson.

9. Further your discussion by focusing on the idea of words and thoughts as things to be owned—as Nell states, "once I published that book and my words became a commodity..." (p. 91). How has this impacted her relationship with Fen? Consider her statement "I only know that when F leaves and B and I talk I feel like I am saying—and hearing—the first wholly honest words of my life" (p. 198).

Discussion Questions

"A taut, witty, fiercely intelligent tale of competing egos and desires in a landscape of exotic menace—a love triangle in extremis... King is brilliant."

- *New York Times Book Review*



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Lily King's first novel, *The Pleasing Hour* (1999) won the Barnes and Noble Discover Award and was a New York Times Notable Book and an alternate for the PEN/Hemingway Award. Her second, *The English Teacher*, was a Publishers Weekly Top Ten Book of the Year, a Chicago Tribune Best Book of the Year, and the winner of the Maine Fiction Award. Her third novel, *Father of the Rain* (2010), was a New York Times Editors Choice, a Publishers Weekly Best Novel of the Year and winner of both the New England Book Award for Fiction and the Maine Fiction Award. Her fourth

novel *Euphoria* was published 2014.

Lily King grew up in Massachusetts and received her B.A. in English Literature from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and her M.A. in Creative Writing from Syracuse University. She has taught English and Creative Writing at several universities and high schools in this country and abroad.

Lily is the recipient of a MacDowell Fellowship and a Whiting Writer's Award. Her short fiction has appeared in literary magazines including *Ploughshares* and *Glimmer Train*, as well as in several anthologies. (Adapted from the publisher.)

Book Summary

From New England Book Award winner Lily King comes a breathtaking novel about three young anthropologists of the '30's caught in a passionate love triangle that threatens their bonds, their careers, and, ultimately, their lives.

English anthropologist Andrew Bankson has been alone in the field for several years, studying the Kiona river tribe in the Territory of New Guinea. Haunted by the memory of his brothers' deaths and increasingly frustrated and isolated by his research, Bankson is on the verge of suicide when a chance encounter with colleagues, the controversial Nell Stone and her wry and mercurial Australian husband Fen, pulls him back from the brink.

Nell and Fen have just fled the bloodthirsty Mumbanyo and, in spite of Nell's poor health, are hungry for a new discovery. When Bankson finds them a new tribe nearby, the artistic, female-dominated Tam, he ignites an intellectual and romantic firestorm between the three of them that burns out of anyone's control.

Set between two World Wars and inspired by events in the life of revolutionary anthropologist Margaret Mead, *Euphoria* is an enthralling story of passion, possession, exploration, and sacrifice from accomplished author Lily King.

Discussion Questions

1. Set against the lush tropical landscape of 1930s New Guinea, this novel charts British anthropologist Andrew Bankson's fascination for colleagues Nell Stone and her husband, Fen, a fascination that turns deadly. How does the setting play a role in the shaping events?
2. "She tried not to think about the villages they were passing...the tribes she would never know and words she would never hear, the worry that they might right now be passing the one people she was meant to study, a people whose genius she would unlock, and who would unlock hers, a people who had a way of life that made sense to her" (p. 8). In the light of this quote, discuss Nell Stone's passion and need for anthropology and find ways in which they differ from Bankson's and Fen's. Talk about the significance of her childhood dream of being carried away by gypsies.
3. Continue your discussion by considering Nell's statement: "If I didn't believe they shared my humanity entirely, I wouldn't be here...I'm not interested in zoology" (p. 55). Find instances in the novel in which she demonstrates this. How far do you agree, as Nell states, that it is an anthropologist's role to encourage self-analysis and self-awareness in the tribes he/she studies?
4. Over the course of the novel we learn a great deal about Bankson's childhood and young adulthood. Talk about the reasons and life events that brought him to anthropology. What has led him to the brink of suicide? How seriously do you think he views his statement: "The meaning of life is the quest to understand the structure and order of the natural world---that was the mantra I was raised on. To deviate from it was suicide" (p. 32).